DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 400 701 FL 024 181

AUTHOR Bouton, Lawrence F.
TITLE Pragmatics and Language Learning.
PUB DATE 96
NOTE 22p.; In: Bouton, Lawrence F., Ed. Pragmatics and Language Learning. Monograph Series Volume 7, p1-20, 1996; see FL 024 180.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Communicative Competence (Languages); *Cross Cultural Studies; *English (Second Language); Language Research; Linguistic Theory; *Pragmatics; Research Methodology; Research Tools; *Research Utilization; Second Language Instruction; Second Language Learning; *Speech Acts; *Theory Practice Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *Implicatures

ABSTRACT

The roles that pragmatics can play in the development of communicative competence are discussed, and three uses are examined in greater detail, with examples offered: (1) for the refinement of the study of speech acts as they occur in different cultures; (2) to help determine the extent to which explicit instruction can increase the rate at which non-native speakers of English can develop different facets of their pragmatic competence (in the example cited, competence with implicatures); and (3) as a contribution to the presentation of different functions of a language in textbooks designed for second language learners. Data from studies are presented for illustration. It is concluded that the current challenge is to ensure that what is learned about pragmatics is used effectively in the second language classroom. Contains 30 references. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 400 701

PRAGMATICS AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Lawrence F. Bouton

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL
HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Lawrence F
Bouton

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- ☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

FL 024187

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PRAGMATICS AND LANGUAGE LEARNING

Lawrence F. Bouton

The purpose of this paper is to consider some of roles that pragmatics can play in the development of communicative competence. To illustrate three of those roles, three specific examples are given: one focused on the improvement of the tools necessary to cross-cultural research; one that follows a line of research beginning with the investigation into different types of implicature and moves on into the classroom to see if the skills necessary to the interpretation of those implicatures can be taught effectively in an ESL classroom and, finally, one focused on the interaction of the researcher and the language educator so that what is found out by the investigator gets into the language classroom instead of lingering only in the seminars and journals frequented by pragmatics enthusiasts.

INTRODUCTION

The subject of this conference and title of this paper, *Pragmatics and Language Learning*, represents the conjunction of two disciplines. What's more, it suggests a belief on the part of those who come to conference, whether to present papers or simply to listen and to interact with others who they find there, that **pragmatics** and **language learning** are inherently bound together and that both are stronger because of that bond than either would be by itself. Pragmatics provides language teachers and learners with a research-based understanding of the language forms and functions that are appropriate to the many contexts in which a language is used -- an understanding that is crucial to a proficient speaker's communicative competence. At the same time, the importance of this knowledge to the language learning process, and our realization as to how limited that knowledge is, has provided a powerful motivation for the rapid expansion that we have seen in pragmatics research over the past 15 years. And so each of these two disciplines contributes to and stimulates the other.

This bond, of course, has not always existed. Not long ago, pragmatics was only a gleam in the eye of a few far seeing and perceptive scholars of various persuasions. And language learning was accomplished by repeating strings of isolated sentences chorus-like, often to the regular clapping of the teacher's hands or the tick-tock of a metronome enthroned prominently in the front of the classroom. I remember hearing one teacher praised highly in the early 70's because, it was said, he could put his class through drill after drill without missing a beat. And why not? For, as Paulston (1980) reminds us, (citing works by two of the most eminent language pedagogues of that period), "Drills [were] undertaken solely for the sake of practice, in order that performance [might] become habitual and automatic" (Brooks, 1964, p. 146), and "[those drills] made no pretense of being communication" (Bowen, 1965, p. 295).

Then, in 1971, how languages were taught and learned began to change - thanks in large part to Savignon's demonstration that if the students were given practice in *truly*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

communicative acts in addition to work with the structure and vocabulary of the language, *communicative competence* could be developed in the language classroom from the first day of class. *Communicative competence*, as Savignon used the term then, involved a person's "ability to function in a truly communicative setting," to do things like getting directions to the nearest pharmacy, giving an accurate account of an accident to which the person has been a witness, or making introductions at a dinner party (1971, p. 1). In short, *communicative competence* permitted a person to use the language he had learned "in a variety of very practical situations" (p. 45).

The idea that the development of *communicative competence* should be an immediate and central goal of language pedagogy caught on quickly. But, as Savignon noted 12 years later, instruction intended to develop communicative competence in the target language will be useful only to the extent that teachers alert their students to the need to adapt their communication strategies to the new culture. When teachers fail to do this - when they fail to provide an authentic cultural context within which the meaning of what is said and done in the classroom can be interpreted - "the goal of communicative competence is an illusion." In short, she says, this focus on L2 social rules required by adopting communicative competence as the primary objective of language learning "puts a tremendous burden on the teacher who must become an anthropologist of sorts, discovering and interpreting cultural behavior for which there are no explicit rules" (1983, p. 25). The unfortunate fact was that, at that time, scholars were just beginning to become interested in pragmatics and to recognize its importance to the language learning process. Furthermore, teachers were not really prepared to be amateur anthropologists as McLeod (1976) urged them to be, or to do their own pragmatics research. In 1980, only 23 MATESL programs, or less than a third of all of those in operation in the United States at that time, included any course related to culture and, of course, none of them listed a course in pragmatics.

But that was 15 years ago, when both pragmatics and the communicative competence movement among language teachers were still relatively new to the academic world. By now, of course, the proportion of MATESL programs offering courses related to culture has increased. Sixty-five of the 171 MATESL programs described in TESOL's *Directory of Professional Programs* list courses in sociolinguistics, for example; 48 show courses in intercultural communication, and 18 even include courses in pragmatics or discourse analysis. But still today, the descriptions of 58 of the 171 programs in the United States have no culture oriented courses of any sort.

It was fortunate, therefore, that about the same time that language teachers adopted the development of *communicative competence* as their primary objective, *pragmatics* was coming into its own also. The topics on which pragmatics focused were often just those that were troublesome to language teachers. As Beebe (1988) notes, for instance, a great deal of effort has gone into the description and analysis of different speech acts -- the contexts to which they are appropriate, how they are performed, whether at least some of them have characteristics in common. More recently, cross cultural studies have been undertaken to determine whether the same speech act can be found in different cultures and, if so, to what extent it is performed in the same way and appropriate to the same context from one culture to another.

It was to foster the relationship between pragmatics and language learning that the annual Conference on Pragmatics and Language Learning was initiated at the University of Illinois in 1987. Over the years, a considerable number of papers have been presented there on speech act research and on politeness strategies related to those acts. Other papers have dealt with various facets of written discourse; still others, more than one might imagine, have reported on analyses of discourse in the classroom, and a few have pursued what so far seem to be rather esoteric topics, but extremely important, for instance Molly Wieland's (1991) Tannen-like investigation of turn-taking in a cross cultural context involving French and American bilinguals in France, and Ann Berry's (1994) similar work with Spanish and English bilinguals in the United States. What we have lacked to some extent are rigorous investigations searching for ways to make pragmatics more readily and meaningfully available to language programs.

SOME CONTRIBUTIONS PRAGMATICS CAN MAKE TO LANGUAGE PEDAGOGY

It is with that purpose in mind that we will now to look at three different aspects of pragmatics that have something to offer to language pedagogy: (1) the refinement of the study of speech acts as they occur in different cultures; (2) an investigation to determine the extent to which explicit instruction can increase the rate at which nonnative speakers (NNS) develop different facets of their pragmatic competence; and (3) the contribution that pragmatics can make to the presentation of different functions of a language in textbooks designed for second language learners.

The Cross Cultural Investigation of Speech Acts

The first of these involves cross-cultural research into when and how speech acts are performed by people from different cultural backgrounds. In doing this type of research there are two basic questions: first, given a particular context, will the same speech act be appropriate to that context in the different cultures being studied; and second, if so, what form will that speech act take in each case. But if such studies are to be effective, it is important that the investigator and the subjects providing the data perceive the various facets of the contexts to which the subjects are to respond in the same light. For example, if an investigator intends a context (s)he has described to be seen as involving interactants of equal status, but the subjects involved in the study perceive them to be unequal, the investigator's analysis of the data will be inherently flawed. What's more, this same thing is true of the social distance assumed to exist between the interactants, the seriousness of the imposition behind a request that is to make of the other, etc. Yet, as Cody and McLaughlin (1985) have shown, the perception of the investigator and that of the subjects do, in fact, differ at times. And Spencer-Oatey (1993) has pursued this problem a step further and has established that groups of subjects from different cultural backgrounds can also perceive the same speech act context quite differently. And so if we are to carry on cross-cultural speech act studies successfully, it is clear that new ways have to be found to ensure that the investigator and the subjects, whatever their cultural background, share a common perception of the various contexts to which the subjects are asked to respond.

One attempt to resolve this problem is that underlying the dissertation research of Mei-chen Huang (1996) involving a comparison of American and Chinese *requests*. The basic instrument that Huang has used in this study is a form of the DCT. In each item that she uses, she confronts her subjects with a context within which they interact with another character of whom they are to make a request. It is assumed that the form of the request will depend on the social distance and the power differential that the subjects perceive to exist between themselves and the other character in each situation, and also on the extent to which they see the request they are to make as an imposition on the other person. But, as Spencer-Oatey has noted in the study mentioned earlier, "people from different socio-cultural groups may hold differing norms regarding the power and distance of a given role relationship" (p. 28). The problem for Huang, then, was to insure that the situations that she developed were such that both Chinese and American subjects would assign the same relative power and social distance to each situation so that the contexts within which subjects made their requests would be as comparable as they could be made to be. The careful, step by step approach that she developed in the process provides us with a model to use in pursuing further studies of this sort and, at the same time, gives others comparing Chinese and American speech acts a set of contexts to use as they see fit that are perceived by both Chinese and American subjects as essentially the same with regard to the relative status and social distance separating the characters and the imposition involved in the request.

From the start Huang took nothing for granted. The first round of her study involved asking a number of Americans and a number of Chinese college students for a list of as many different people as they could that they might make a request of. Then she asked these same people for lists of requests that they might make of these people. Furthermore, she made sure that these Groups of Chinese and Americans were demographically similar to the subsequent groups she would be working with.

Once she had these lists of requestees and requests from both the Americans and the Chinese, Huang created a survey that investigated the perception of the relative power and distance that the subjects felt existed between themselves and the person named in each. Items like those in (1) were used to ask the subjects to make these judgements, rating each person on a 3-point scale.

(1) Below is a list of people and situations. Please **CIRCLE** an appropriate rating score (1, 2, 3) to indicate the amount of power and distance each person would normally have in relation to you according to the following criteria:

<u>Power</u>:	low	equal	high
	1	2	3

1 (low) -- The person in question has **less social power or lower status than you**.
2 (equal) -- The person in question and you have **equal social power or status**.
3 (high) -- The person in question has **more social power or greater status than you**.

For example: if you think that your boss in the office has **High** social power in relation to you, then circle **3** for **Power**.

Distance: close moderate distant
1 2 3

1 (close) -- The person in question is **likely to be a good friend or relative and close to you.**
2 (moderate) -- The person in question would probably be **an acquaintance or a friend, but not particularly close to you.**
3 (distant) -- The person in question would probably be **a stranger to you.**

For example: if you think that your boss in your office is an acquaintance or friend, but not particularly close to you, i.e., the social distance between you and your boss in the office is **Moderate**, then circle **2** for **Distance**.

1. Your little brother/sister an elementary school child -- at home. Power: 1 2 3 Distance: 1 2 3

2. A fellow student in your department who you never talked with before -- in the hallway. Power: 1 2 3 Distance: 1 2 3

3. A city police officer -- on the street. Power: 1 2 3 Distance: 1 2 3

(Huang, 1996)

The second half of the questionnaire asked the subjects to indicate how much of an imposition they thought each of the requests listed there would be if asked of someone who was merely an acquaintance. This was to be done by rating that imposition as either *small* or *big* as in the example in (2).

(2) Below is a list of requests. Please **CIRCLE** an appropriate rating score (1 or 2) for each item according to the size of imposition (small or big) that you perceive when you issue that request to **a person with whom you are acquainted but who is not a close friend.**

Imposition: small big
1 2

1. Ask someone to help wash your car. Imposition: 1 2

2. Ask someone to switch the TV channel she/he is watching to one you like. Imposition: 1 2

3. Ask someone to lend you his/her car. Imposition: 1 2

4. Ask someone what time it is since you don't have a watch. Imposition: 1 2

Once all of this data from (1), (2) and (3) had been processed, those characters and requests on which the subjects had been unable to reach a consensus as to how they should be rated were discarded. The rest were combined into situations like those in (4), which were given to new sets of Chinese and Americans, who again rated the characters and the requests in terms of power, distance and imposition, just as they had initially.

(4) You need a nice stereo for a weekend party. Your little brother/ sister, an elementary school child, just got a very nice one as his/her birthday present. You ask him/her to lend it to you for this weekend party to which he/she is not invited.

Imposition: 1 2
Power: 1 2 3
Distance: 1 2 3

This last step involving items like those in (4) was necessary because there was concern that once the characters and requests had been combined into specific situations, the interaction of those two elements within those situations might change the way in one or the other was perceived by some or all of the subjects -- and this did happen in a half dozen cases. But by and large the ratings held firm and those situations for which they did were then organized into DCTs and combined into a research instrument ready for the next and final step -- a cross-cultural study of American and Chinese requests. What's more, given the rigorous process through which the situations eliciting those requests were developed, we can assume that they will be seen as involving essentially the same relative power, social distance and imposition in both the Chinese and the American cultures. This will mean that any difference in the requests themselves should be assigned to some other cause.

Huang's study should prove extremely valuable to teachers, textbook writers, and researchers who are responsible for helping Chinese students learn to use *request strategies* in American English. For one thing, there will be the obvious benefit that comes from a careful comparison of what strategies are used by the members of the two groups in situations that both perceive as essentially the same.

But there are also important by-products of Huang's approach. For example, because she has developed a set of characters, requests and situations that are perceived in the same way by both Chinese and Americans, she can use these herself, or offer to others, either for reduplication of the same study or for new cross-cultural research related to requests in some other way. Or her contexts themselves can be taken into the classroom and used when teachers or textbook writers want to set up situations in the United States that they are sure Chinese students will recognize and understand on the basis of their experience in their own culture. And, finally, in developing and refining the steps she has taken to insure the comparability of the Chinese and American contexts in her study, Huang has developed a model for doing that type of work that can be studied, followed and perhaps improved upon by others.

Teaching NNS to Interpret Implicatures -- Can It Be Done?

A second type of pragmatics project that can be of value to the language classroom is one that studies pragmatic principles related to that language and ends up investigating whether what it discovers can be taught effectively in the language classroom. One such study concerned itself with the ability of NNS to derive the same message from American English implicatures and, to the extent that they do not, whether the skills necessary to close that gap can be taught effectively.

The study began in 1986, at which time it was established that NNS on arriving in the United States tended to interpret American English implicatures the way NS do only about 79 percent of the time (Bouton, 1988). As the study progressed, we also noted that certain types of implicature were considerably more difficult than others for NNS to master, though for NS there was little difference in this respect. At the same time, a survey of a number of ESL texts showed that none of them made any direct attempt to develop the skills necessary to interpret implicatures, and instances in which the attention of the students was focused on a particular implicature as a source of indirectly conveyed information were relatively rare. "In most English language texts," it was noted, "there are relatively few examples of it in lines assigned characters in dialogues...and when such lines do occur, the implicatures involved may or may not be highlighted through comments or discussion questions" (Bouton, 1990, pp. 45-46). Knowing this, it was not surprising that we found the progress made by NNS in learning to interpret American English implicatures successfully to be slow. And this led us to wonder whether that rate of progress could be increased through explicit instruction in the ESL classroom designed for that purpose.

The answer, it turns out, is clearly *yes* for some types of implicature, though not for all. But before we can go on to the issues we have just raised in more detail, we first need to make clear exactly what we mean by the term *implicature*. Implicature was first mentioned by Grice (1975, 1981) and further developed by Levinson (1983) and Green (1989) among others. It is a process through which inferences are drawn based on the interaction of an utterance and the context in which it is uttered. Consider, for example, the question *Do you have any coffee?* asked of a person behind the counter in a fast food restaurant, on the one hand, or of a clerk in a grocery store, on the other. In the first case, the question would probably be understood to be asking for a cup of coffee to drink; in the second, it would be seen as asking if they have coffee beans in some form and, perhaps, exactly where they could be found in the store. In both cases, the utterance was the same; the difference in the message came from the interaction of that utterance with the situation in which it occurred. These different messages are said to be derived through *implicature*, and the messages themselves are usually referred to as *implicatures*. Some of the different types of implicature that were used in this study are given in (5)-(10). [Note that the utterance embodying the implicature in each question is in italics.]

5. **Relevance implicatures:**

   A: How about going for a walk?
   B: *Isn't it raining out?*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

6. **Minimum Requirement Rule** - Two golfers are talking about their chances in the local university golf tournament.

Fred: What kind of score do you think it will take to make the cut tomorrow, Brad?
Brad: Oh, a 75 ought to do it. *Did you have a 75? I didn't.*
Fred: *Yeah, I did.*

7. **Indirect Criticism:**

A: Have you seen *Robin Hood*?
B: Yeah. I went last night.
A: What did you think of it?
B: *The cinematography was great.*
A: Oh, that bad, huh?

8. **Sequence-based implicature** -- easily seen in the oddness of...

Jack ate his steak and barbecued it without saying a word.
Mary dialed Joe's number, waited for the dial tone, and quickly picked up the phone.

9. **The POPE Q implicature**:

A: Does Dr. Walker always give a test the day before vacation?
B: *Does the sun come up in the east*?

10. **Irony**: Bill and Peter work together in the same office. They sometimes are sent on business trips together and are becoming good friends. They often have lunch together and Peter has even invited Bill to have dinner with him and his wife at their home several times. Now Peter's friends have told him that they saw Bill out dancing with Peter's wife recently while Peter was out of town on a business trip. On hearing this, Peter's comment was...

Peter: *"Bill knows how to be a really good friend, doesn't he?"*

All but the most recent facets of the study have been reported elsewhere (Bouton, 1988, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1994), so we will discuss here only those aspects related to the question of whether NNS interpretation of implicatures can be improved through explicit classroom instruction focused.

As we noted earlier, the first step in this study was to test two groups of nonnative English speaking international students (NNS) shortly after their arrival in the United States. The purpose of that test was to determine the extent to which they could derive the same message from American English implicatures that American NS did. The first group, consisting of 436 subjects, was tested in 1986; the second, numbering 304, in 1990.

When the interpretations of the implicatures by the two NNS groups were compared with those of the Americans, it was found that the 1986 group had derived the expected message from the implicatures only 71.3 percent of the time, or 79.5 percent as often as the American NS control group did (Table 1). The 1990 group, using a revised version of the same test, answered as expected 76.8 percent of the time, or 84.8 percent as often as the Americans (Table 2)[1]. This suggested that the use of implicature as a cross-cultural conversational strategy did pose a potential obstacle to interaction between Americans and international students. The question, then, was whether this problem would resolve itself over time.

To answer this question, a longitudinal study was conducted in which subsets of the 1986 and the 1990 groups were tested again after they had been at the university for extended periods of time. For instance, one group of 30 NNS who had been tested in 1986 were retested in 1991, after they had been on campus for 4 1/2 years. By that time, the NNS interpreted the implicatures as expected 91.5% as often as the Americans did, up from the original 79.5% (Table 1). Students from the 1990 group were retested 17 and 33 months later with similar results (Table 2). And finally, as a cross sectional variation on these two studies, students who had been in the United States for from 4 to 7 years were tested in 1992 using the same test that had been used with the 1990 group (Table 2).[2]

Table 1: Comparison of the Mean Scores of NNS and NS in the 4 ½ Year Study

NNS/NS	NNS	NNS	NS
Date Given	Aug 86	Jan 91	Aug 86
Number of Items	28	28	28
Mean Score	19.97	22.97	25.11
N	30	30	28
% choosing the expected message	71.3%	82.0%	89.7%
Ratio - $Mean_{__}/Mean_{_}$	79.5%	91.5%	---

On the other hand, though the number of items that were troublesome for the NNS had shrunk from 20 to 8, those eight constituted almost 30% of the total number of items tested. These subjects were native-like in their interpretation of 70% of the implicatures facing them, but not at all so with regard to the rest. They had come a long way, but there was still a ways to go - and it had taken 4 1/2 years.

The same thing proved true with the 1990 group (Table 2). On the first testing, the NNS derived the expected message only 83.4% as often as the American NS. Seventeen months later, that figure had risen to 90.6%, and 16 months after that, to 94.4%. And for a third group, who had been in the United States for from 4 to 7 years, the figure was 94.1%.

Table 2: Comparison of the Mean Scores of the NNS and the NS in the 1990 Longitudinal Study

NNS/NS	NNS	NNS	NNS	NNS	NS
Date Given	Aug 90	17 mo	33 mo	4-7 yr	--
Number of Items	22	22	22	22	22
Mean Score	16.90	18.06	18.80	18.74	19.92
N	304	34	35	34	77
% choosing the expected message	78.8%	82.1	85.5	85.1	90.5
Ratio - $Mean_{_}/Mean_{_}$	84.8%	90.7%	94.4%	94.1%	---

As we can see from Table 2, there was no statistically significant difference between the percentages of NNS in any of these immersion groups who derived the expected message from the entire set of 22 items. But if we consider only the mean scores for the test as a whole in making these comparisons, the analysis that we achieve is rather superficial. Instead, we need to look also at the difficulty the different types of implicatures posed for each of the different groups in the study. When we do that, we see that some implicatures seem to be easier for the international students to interpret than others. For example, one in every four NNS were unable to interpret the implicatures in Table 3 appropriately when they first arrived on campus. In fact, except for items 2 and 23, these implicatures were still troublesome to the immersion groups on being retested after from 17 months to 7 years spent at the university. Also, for the most part, these implicatures tended to belong to clearly defined sets, i.e., those based on the *Pope Q implicature*, *Indirect Criticism*, *Irony*, *Sequence* and *scalar implicatures*[3]. These implicatures we will refer to as *The Tough 10*.

Table 3: Implicatures that Proved Difficult for NNS Initially and Tended to Remain So After Immersion

///	ARRIVAL	NNS IMMERSION GROUP			NS	TYPE
Item	304 NNS	After 17 mo	After 33 mo	After 4-7 yr	//// ////	///////// /////////
23	75	88	89	94	95	Relevance
2	65	82	94	94	99	Indir crit
15	60	76	71	76	100	Indir crit
22	52	52	68	91	64*	Indir crit
11	65	76	86	65	91	Sequence
17	79	82	86	92	100	POPE Q
1	48	62	71	53	86	POPE Q
18	47	53	60	56	75*	Irony
6	51	53	57	76	84	Irony
24	74	74	74	86	70*	Scalar
Mean	61.9	73.8	79.3	78.5	89.1	/////////

Note: All results are expressed as the percentage of the group selecting the expected interpretation.

In contrast with the implicatures set down in Table 3, those in Table 4 proved relatively easy for the NNS to interpret when they first took the test. What's more, after the NNS had been attending the university for some time, with one exception, even those items that had been moderately difficult at the outset (i.e., items 8, 13, 20, 21, 25) grew easier to handle with the simple passage of time. These easier implicatures, with two exceptions, were those based on Relevance and on the Minimum Requirement Rule.

Table 4: Implicatures that Proved Relatively Easy for NNS Initially and Tended to Remain So After Immersion

///	ARRIVAL	NNS IMMERSION GROUP			NS	TYPE
Item	304 NNS	After 17 mo	After 33 mo	After 4-7 yr	//// ////	///////// /////////
19	98	94	100	100	100	Relevance
16	99	100	100	100	100	Relevance
4	92	100	100	100	97	Relevance
10	94	97	94	94	100	Relevance
5	89	85	91	97	100	Relevance
13	86	91	94	94	97	Relevance
21	83	82	94	82	96	Relevance
25	78	88	89	91	94	Relevance
12	87	74	89	85	81	Min Req R
20	82	82	82	83	82	Min Req R
7	88	97	94	82	99	POPE Q
8	80	91	91	99	91	Indir Crit
Mean	88.0	90.1	93.1	91.8	94.8	/////////

Note: All results are expressed as the percentage of the group selecting the expected interpretation.

Before leaving these two tables, we need to make two other observations. First, although there is little difference between the percentages of NNS and NS who derived the expected message from the relatively easy implicatures in Table 4, that is not at all true with regard to the *Tough 10* in Table 3. While, 8 of the *Tough 10* remained tough for the NNS throughout the study, there was very little difference in the performance of the NS no matter which of the two sets of implicatures they were faced with. As a result, it seems that the difference between the performance of the NS and that of the NNS on the *Tough 10* may be responsible for the sizeable difference between the mean scores of the NNS and NS for the test as a whole ($p < .0001$).

Second, though there was no statistically significant difference between the overall performance of the three immersion groups on the test as a whole, the results with regard to specific items listed in the two tables suggest that the 17 month group tended to lag somewhat behind the other two. For instance, on 7 of the *Tough 10* items and one item from the easier set, fewer than 75 percent of the 17 month group answered as expected. This compares with a total of 5 items for the 33 month group and 6 for the 4-7 year group. In addition, there were a total of 4 other items on which the number of NNS interpreting the implicature as expected was 10 percent less than that for the NS, while for the 33 month group this was true of only one other item and for the 4-7 year group, only 2. All in all, then, the 17 month group seems to have developed somewhat less of a mastery of the different types of implicature than the other two immersion groups had.

And so, from these two tables, we can see that given sufficient time, NNS international students do increase their ability to interpret implicatures in American English. But the process seems slow: there are a number of implicature types that remain systematically difficult for the entire period covered by this study; others were mastered only after several months or years. It was these facts that motivated the last part of this study: Can the skills required to interpret implicatures be developed more rapidly by focusing on them in the ESL classroom?

The subjects in the pedagogically oriented component of the study were international graduate students who were required to take the university's advanced ESL course; their TOEFL scores averaged approximately 550. Four sections (55 students), taught by 4 different teachers comprised the experimental group, and 7 sections (109 students) acted as the control group.

The scheduled instruction for the experimental group totaled 6 hours over a 6 week period; in addition, an instructor might occasionally use examples of one implicature or another as the focus of an informal 5 minute *warm up period* at the beginning of the class. The approach taken involved what might be called consciousness raising with regard to the use of implicatures in English. Each type of implicature covered in the study was described and illustrated and its possible uses discussed. Students were encouraged to think of similar implicatures from their own languages, to listen for other instances of the same type of implicature in conversations that went on around them, both inside and outside the classroom, and to make up examples of their own. The sections in the control group were not given any explicit instruction related to implicature that they would not normally have had, which would amount to very little if any. Both the experimental and the control sections were tested at the beginning and end of the 6 weeks using the same instrument as both pre- and posttest.

The results of these tests, which are given in Table 5, were surprising in two different ways. First, the two types of implicature that were uniformly quite easy for the NNS when they arrived on campus -- those based on Relevance and on the Minimum Requirement Rule --which one might have thought would be easy to teach turned out not to be. In fact, as we see from the top half of Table 5, there was no progress whatsoever by the experimental group in interpreting these implicatures. On the other hand, most of those implicature-types identified as belonging to the Tough 10 and found in the bottom half of Table 5 proved highly susceptible to instruction. (The only exception to this generalization was the Scalar implicature, which was uniformly difficult for NNS and NS alike.) While the number of those in the control group that could derive the expected message from these more difficult implicatures rose by only 3.3%, the same figure for the experimental group showed an average increase of 27.1%. Furthermore, this improvement was seen to at least some extent in relation to each of the different implicatures: there were none for which there was not at least a 15% rise in the number of subjects responding as expected. Clearly with regard to the type of implicatures in the *Tough 10*, the instruction was effective.[5]

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table 5: Comparison of the Increase in the Ability of Experimental and Control Groups to Interpret American English Implicatures. (Expressed in Percentages of each group answering as expected.)

	Generally easy to learn; otherwise hard to teach						
Item	CONT1	CONT2	C2-C1	EXP1	EXP2	E1-E2	Type of IMPLC
4	92	96	+4	87	93	+6	Relevance
5	90	91	+1	89	85	--	Relevance
10	92	95	+3	95	95	--	Relevance
13	89	88	-1	89	89	--	Relevance
16	94	97	+3	100	100	--	Relevance
19	96	97	+1	98	98	--	Relevance
21	78	77	-1	84	76	-8	Relevance
23	75	77	-2	76	73	-3	Relevance
25	82	76	-6	71	78	+7	Relevance
12	83	90	+7	84	91	+7	Min. Req.
20	83	80	-3	84	78	-6	Min. Req.
24	76	72	-4	75	76	+1	Scalar
Avg	84.9	85.1	0.5	86.0	86.0	0.0	

	Hard to learn; easy to teach						
Item	CONT1	CONT2	C2-C1	EXP1	EXP2	E1-E2	Type of IMPLC
1	51	65	+14	55	85	**+30**	Pope Q
7	94	94	--	76	96	**+20**	Pope Q
17	81	81	--	80	95	**+15**	Pope Q
2	67	76	+9	53	96	**+43**	Indirect Crit.
8	81	84	+3	67	93	**+26**	Indirect Crit.
15	52	49	-3	42	78	**+36**	Indirect Crit.
22	61	70	+9	53	84	**+31**	Indirect Crit.
11	61	62	+1	58	80	**+22**	Sequence
6	44	44	--	36	69	**+33**	Irony
18	50	57	--	49	64	**+15**	Irony
Avg	64.2	68.1	+3.3	58.5	83.3	**27.1**	---

The improvement in the performance of those in the experimental group as compared to that of the control group can be seen easily from Table 5, but to put their growth in a broader, more meaningful perspective, we also need to compare it with that of the NNS in the immersion groups mentioned earlier. This has been done in Table 6. What we find there

is that there was no significant difference between the overall performance of the experimental group and that of any of the three immersion groups. If we then look just at the mean scores of the different groups found in the bottom half of Table 6, we notice that, for the 4 types of implicature found there, the experimental group had actually performed better than the others. There seems to be no doubt that with those for types of implicature, explicit instruction can speed up the development of pragmatic competence. The skills needed to interpret such implicatures in the Tough 10 apparently can be taught. With these students, the improvement came quickly and with relatively little energy.

Table 6: Comparison of the Percent of the Experimental and Immersion Groups and NS Answering as Expected on the Various Implicature Sets

Item	On Arrival Aug 1990	EXPERIMENTAL		IMMERSION			NS	TYPE
		EXP	EXP	17mo	33mo	4-7yrs		
4	92	87	93	100	100	94	97	Relevance
5	89	89	85	85	91	97	100	Relevance
10	94	95	95	97	94	94	100	Relevance
13	86	89	89	91	94	94	97	Relevance
16	99	100	100	100	100	100	100	Relevance
19	98	98	98	94	100	100	100	Relevance
21	83	76	73	82	94	82	96	Relevance
23	75	71	78	88	89	94	95	Relevance
25	78	84	76	88	89	91	88	Relevance
12	87	84	91	74	85	85	81	Min Req. R
20	82	84	78	82	83	82	81	Min Req R.
24	74	75	76	74	86	68	70	Scalar
Avg	87.5	87.0	86	89.2	93.0	92.1	94.1	
1	48	55	85	62	71	53	86	POPE Q
7	88	76	96	97	94	82	99	POPE Q
17	79	80	95	82	86	91	100	POPE Q
2	65	53	96	82	94	94	94	Indir. Crit
8	78	67	93	91	91	99	91	Indir. Crit
15	60	42	78	76	71	76	100	Indir. Crit
22	52	53	84	76	76	91	64	Indir. Crit
11	65	58	80	76	86	65	91	Sequence
6	51	36	69	53	57	76	84	Irony
18	47	49	64	53	60	56	75	Irony
Avg	64.3	58.5	83.3	74.7	79.3	77.4	86	

Of course, there is still need for further study in this area. We cannot be sure, for example, why the Tough 10 were so easy to teach, while the relevance-based implicatures proved totally impervious to such efforts. One possible explanation lies in the formulaic nature of the different implicatures in the Tough 10. These formulas could be taught and practiced. The relevance-based implicatures, on the other hand, depended on the interpreter's being alert to all of the different cultural elements underlying each particular implicature -- requiring an immense amount of knowledge, the details of which cannot be easily taught or generalized. If this proves to be the explanation, then our best course of action would seem to be a continuing investigation into the large set of implicatures that we have called *relevance-based*, with the goal of finding other formulas that may underlie some of them. If such formulas can be found, then they, too, can be taught effectively in the ESL classroom.

Also, as we look further into how specific types of implicature work, we need to find a way of determining the frequency with which each of them are used and the contexts in which they are likely to occur. Such information is a necessary input into the process of determining which implicatures should be taught and in what pragmatic frames they should be couched. How to carry out such a study is not at all clear, but it must be done. At the same time, we must find ways of integrating appropriate instruction into ESL programs around the country. ESL texts still pay little attention to implicatures, and even those course in which this study was conducted has returned to its earlier format and includes little or no explicit instruction related to the use of implicature -- partly because of too few materials and too little understanding of implicatures on the part of the instructors. But if Green (1989) is right that "conversational implicature is an absolutely unremarkable and ordinary conversational strategy" (p. 92) and, therefore, essential to the communicative competence of any NNS of English (or any other language), then the failure to include it within the scope of our ESL courses is to leave an important gap in our students' communicative competence -- one that we have shown to be closed only slowly with the passage of time.

Pragmatics and the Teaching of Speech Acts: Invitations

Although very little work has been done with regard to the distribution of different types of implicature, the same is not true of some speech acts. Wolfson (1981, 1983a, 1983b, 1989), for example, has provided us with thorough discussions of both compliments and invitations, and her work has been replicated and extended by numerous others (Herbert, 1990; Holmes, 1986; Davidson, 1984; Isaacs and Clark, 1990). Through work of this sort, we have a relatively thorough understanding of the form, the function, and the distribution of both compliments and speech acts. And this information can and should provide the foundation from which ESL texts build the substantive component underlying their presentation of these speech acts.

As an example of what pragmatics can contribute to the teaching of invitations, for example, we will look at one of the better presentations of this speech available today -- that in Wall's (1987) *Say It Naturally*. Furthermore, it was published either before or at essentially the same time as several of the articles just mentioned. None the less, because of the information provided in those articles, teachers who have read them can modify Wall's

presentation and improve what it offers by bringing it more in line with what we know about how invitations are actually used.

Speech acts taught in an ESL classroom should approximate those used in real life in both form and distribution to the extent that this is made possible by the proficiency of the students involved. Though Wolfson's description of invitations evolved slowly over decade in which she wrote about them, she seemed to see invitations as divided into three sets depending on their form and function: *unambiguous invitations*, which are direct and to the point and always mention a definite time, place, or activity; *ambiguous* (or *negotiable*) *invitations*, which tend to involve both participants in the conversation in the development of the invitation; and the *non-negotiable non-invitation*, which may function as a positive politeness strategy rather than as an actual invitation, often expressing a sincere desire to further the relationship that exists between the people talking (1983).

In terms of the context to which each of these different invitations is appropriate, Wolfson (1985) finds the likelihood that the unambiguous variety will be used in any particular situation depends on the extent to which the relative status and social distance between the participants seems to be static to the person doing the inviting. "Speakers whose relationship is more ambiguous tend to avoid direct invitations with their inherent risk of rejection, and instead negotiate with one another in a mutual back and forth progression which, if successful, will lead to a social commitment" (p.29). And the nonnegotiable invitation is, as we noted, primarily a positive politeness strategy employed during leave takings.

Given our assumption that the presentation of speech acts in an ESL text should approximate authentic speech as far as we can describe it, from what we have said, it follows that such a text should present all three types of invitation that we have discussed and that the frequency of their occurrence in examples and dialogues might approximate their distribution in real life. As Table 7 indicates, however, Wall's presentation does not do this. Where Wolfson tells us that only 26 percent of the invitations in her data were *unambiguous*, 80 percent of the examples given by Wall fall into that category. Where Wolfson's data indicate that 41 percent of the invitations one can expect to meet are *ambiguous*, only 8 percent of the examples in Wall are of that type. And there are no examples of the nonnegotiable invitation even though these comprise fully a third of Wolfson's data. Furthermore there is no discussion at all of the contexts to which these different types of invitation might be appropriate or of how to react when such invitations are offered.

Table 7: The Distribution of the Three Types of Invitation in Wolfson and Wall.

	Wolfson data	Wall examples
Unambiguous invitations	26%	80%
Ambiguous (negotiable) invitations	41%	8%
Non-negotiable non-invitations	33%	0%

CONCLUSION

Wolfson, of course, goes into considerable detail as to the components of the different types of invitation that she describes, including the responses that are appropriate to each, how a person can try to turn a nonnegotiable invitation into an actual one with a successful conclusion. What's more, similar studies that can be of value to teachers and textbook writers alike are available in relation to other speech acts. The purpose of this paper has been to raise the consciousness of all concerned with second language teaching and learning as to the importance of pragmatics and what it can offer to the development of communicative competence in the language classroom. The mass of information about how we interact with each other in various contexts is accumulating rapidly. The challenge to investigator and to teachers alike is to find ways of incorporating that information, explicitly or implicitly, into the language education process.

THE AUTHOR

Lawrence F. Bouton is an Associate Professor of English as an International Language at the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign). His chief area of interest is the role of pragmatics in its many and various forms in different aspects of human interaction.

NOTES

[1]The revisions removed those questions from the original test that had proved unreliable and attempted to provide a more balanced representation of the different types of implicature among the test items. It was also shortened to 25 questions overall, including 3 distractors. As a result of these modifications, the revised test proved to be slightly easier than the 1986 version from which it had been adapted.

[2]To insure that these various immersion groups were representative of the larger 1986 and 1990 groups, respectively, the mean scores of each of the immersion groups were compared with each other and with the group from which they were drawn and no statistically significant differences were found between any of the groups. The one exception to this is the 4-7 year group, for which such a comparison was impossible, since they took the implicature test only once, at the end of their 4-7 years of residence in the university community.

[3]All of these various implicature types were illustrated above in (5)-(10).

[4]Although the NS scores on three of the items were 75% or bglow, those items were retained because of their reliability ratings as determined by the UIUC OIR. Items with a reliability coefficient in the mid 20's (e.g., 0.26) are acceptable and those with a coefficient in the 40's or higher are rated as excellent to outstanding. The reliability coefficient for item 0.42, 0.44, and 0.26, respectively.

[5]It should be emphasized at this point that none of the actual items that appeared on the pre- and posttests were discussed in any way in the classroom. Instructors were provided with a number of other examples based on the same general principles, but differing significantly from the test items in both form and substance. All were aware of the importance of not dealing directly with any of test items. Every effort was made to insure that any improvement made by the experimental group should result from their ability to generalize from the examples brought up in class discussion to those on the test itself.

REFERENCES

Beebe, Leslie. (1988) Five sociolinguistic approaches to second language acquisition. In L. M. Beebe (ed.), *Issues in Second Language Acquisition*, (pp. 43-77). New York: Newbury House.

Berry, Anne. (1994) Spanish and American turn-taking styles: A comparative study. In L. F. Bouton (eds.), *Pragmatics and Language Learning Monograph Series*, vol. 5 (pp. 180-190). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois.

Bouton, L.F. (1988) A cross-cultural study of ability to interpret implicatures in English. *World Englishes*, 7:2, 183-96.

Bouton, L.F. (1990) The effective use of implicature in English: Why and how it should be taught in the ESL classroom. In L.F. Bouton and Y. Kachru (eds.), *Pragmatics and Language Learning Monograph Series*, vol. 1 (pp. 43-52). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois.

Bouton, L.F. (1992) The interpretation of implicature in English by NNS: Does it come Automatically -- without being explicitly taught? *Pragmatics and Language Learning Monograph Series*, vol. 3 (pp. pp. 53-65). Urbana, IL: The University of Illinois.

Bouton, L.F. (1993) Culture, Pragmatics, and Implicature. In H. Nyyssonen and L. Kuure (eds.), *Acquisition of Language--Acquisition of Culture*. Jyvaskyla: AFinLA, pp. 35-61.

Bouton, L.F. (1994) Conversational implicature in a second language: Learned slowly when not deliberately taught, *J. of Pragmatics*, 22, 157-67.

Bowen, J.D. (1965) Appendix: Pedagogy. In R.P. Stockwell, et al., *The Grammatical Structures of Spanish and English*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Brooks, Nelson. (1964) *Language and Language Learning*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Cody, M.J. and M.L. McLaughlin. (1985) The situation as a construct in interpersonal communication research. In M.L. Knapp and G.R. Miller (eds.), *Handbook of Interpersonal Communication*.

Davidson, J. (1984) Subsequent versions of invitations, offers, and requests, and proposals dealing with potential or actual rejections. In J.M. Atkinson and J. Heritage (eds.), *Structures of Social Action*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 102-28.

Green, G. (1989) *Pragmatics and Natural Language Understanding*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Grice, H.P. (1975) Logic and Conversation. In P. Cole and J. Morgan, *Syntax and Semantics*, vol. 9 (pp. 411-58). New York: Academic Press.

Grice, H.P. (1981) Presupposition and conversational implicature. In P. Cole (ed.), *Radical Pragmatics*. New York: Academic Press.

Herbert, R.K. (1990) Sex-based Differences in Compliment Behavior, *Language in Society*, 19:2, 210-24.

Holmes, J. (1986) Compliment and Compliment Responses in New Zealand English, *Anthropological Linguistics*, 28:4, 485-508.

Huang, M. (1996) A contrastive study of American and Chinese requests. Ph.D. dissertation. University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign).

Isaacs, E.A. and H.H. Clark. (1990) Ostensible Invitations, *Language in Society*, 19:4, 493-510.

Levinson, S.P. (1983) *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McLeod, B. (1976) The Relevance of Anthropology to Language Teaching, *TESOL Q*, 10.

Paulston, C.B. (1980) The sequencing of structure pattern drills. In Kenneth Croft (ed.), *Readings on English as a Second Language*, 2nd ed. Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 300-16.

Savignon, S. (1971) A study of the effect of training in communicative skills as part of a beginning college French course on student attitude and achievement in linguistic and communicative competence. Ph.D. dissertation. University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign).

Savignon, S. (1983) *Communicative Competence: Theory and Classroom Practice*. Reading, MA: Addison Wesley.

Spencer-Oatey, H. Conceptions of social relations and pragmatics research, *J. of Pragmatics*, 20:27-47.

Wall, A.P. (1987) Making, Accepting, and Declining Invitations, *Say It Naturally* (pp.126-43). New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Wieland, Molly (1991) Turn-taking as a source of misunderstanding in French-American cross-cultural conversation, *Pragmatics and Language Learning Monograph Series*, vol. 2 (pp. 101-18). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois.

Wolfson, Nessa (1981) Invitations, Compliments, and the Competence of the Native Speaker, *International Journal of Psycholinguistics*, 8:7-22.

Wolfson, Nessa (1983a) How to Arrange for Social Commitments in American English. In N. Wolfson and J. Judd (eds.), *Sociolinguistics and Language Acquisition*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Wolfson, Nessa (1983b) An Empirically Based Analysis of Complimenting in American English. In N. Wolfson and E. Judd (eds.), *Sociolinguistics and Language Acquisition*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Wolfson, Nessa. (1989) *Perspectives*. New York: Newbury House.